

SHIP BILL YIELDS ON U. S. CONTROL

Government to Operate Only if Private Capital Lags.

\$50,000,000 ASKED TO BUY OR BUILD

Shipping Board Would Have Powers Like Commerce Commission.

[From The Tribune Bureau.]
Washington, Jan. 30.—Providing for the expenditure of \$50,000,000 for the buying or building of ships by the government, through a shipping board, which will have also the power to regulate water-borne commerce in much the same fashion as the Interstate Commerce Commission now has the right to regulate interstate land-borne commerce, the administration ship purchase bill has been completed. Its text was made public tonight by Chairman Alexander, of the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee.

The shipping board, under the terms of the bill, will consist of five members, of whom two shall be the Secretary of the Navy and the Secretary of Commerce. The other three will be appointed by the President, and one of the appointed members will be chairman. The board may spend up to \$50,000,000 for the purchase or building of ships, selling Panama Canal bonds to provide the money. The bonds may run for a shorter period than the fifty years now prescribed by law. An initial appropriation of \$55,000,000 for the purchase or lease of vessels and to be obtained by the sale of canal bonds is authorized. If necessary, a corporation may be organized for the operation of the ships, but provision is made for the leasing of the ships to corporations or individuals for operation.

Board's Scope Widened.
The striking difference between the new bill and the one which failed in the Senate last year are modifications of the government operation feature and broadening of the powers of the Shipping Board. Government operation, under the new bill, would be entered on only as a last resort if private capital fails to respond to the enterprise.

One of the most interesting features of the bill is that it not only provides for the regulation of freight rates for water-borne commerce, but specifies that the board may authorize "preferential rates" in certain instances. The object of this, Chairman Alexander pointed out in his formal statement, is to give the American producers an equal opportunity with producers in other parts of the world in competing for foreign trade.

Not only is the board given the right to regulate water freight rates and to fix preferential rates on that traffic in its discretion, but it is also empowered to fix joint rail and water rates, as, for instance, a rate from St. Louis to New York by rail, and then from New York to Rio by water. This is a particular kind of a rate which the bill wishes, when the board deems it necessary, to make preferential.

Crews Would Be Reservists.
In his statement Mr. Alexander dwells at length on the value of the ships for naval auxiliaries in the event of war and of the value of having the trained sailors on the ships. The crews would form part of the naval reserves at all times. The plans for the ships would be specified with a view to their use by the navy. The President is empowered to call the ships to the navy without notice in the event of an emergency.

"The bill," says a statement by Chairman Alexander, "makes the Secretary of the Navy and Commerce members of the shipping board. The Secretary of the Navy for the reason that the vessels purchased or constructed under the act will become a part of the naval establishment in emergencies or in time of war, such vessels to be of a type, so far as our marine trade is concerned, suitable for naval auxiliaries and army transports."

"The Secretary of the Navy is given



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